

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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X BUYING YOUR HOME SEWING MACHINE X

The purchase of a sewing machine for home use is a lifetime investment. Machines of reputable manufacture are built to last for generations of use with only minor replacement of inexpensive parts. The cleaning, oiling, and adjustment of machines are within the ability of any homemaker and are the only maintenance necessary for continued good service.

Today's choice of machines gives a wide range to fit the purchaser's needs and purse. It is often a bit confusing to make a decision. Your present needs may change as the family grows or the children leave to establish their own homes. No one machine is likely to have all the features you consider desirable, so a compromise is in order in selecting the machine that you consider best suited to your present and possible future needs.

Part of your decision should be made at home even before looking at different makes of machines.

The first point to settle is the kind of sewing for which you are buying the machine. Many use their machines only for occasional plain sewing, for patching, mending, or darning, or for the making of simple garments. For this work a straight-sewing machine is satisfactory. This type may be preferred by the woman whose chief interest is fine dress-making and tailoring and who has little use for machine-made decorative effects.

To handle a wider range in stitch styles and for such specialty sewing as decorative stitching and embroidery; for the making of home furnishings, place mats, and napkins; and for seam finishing and buttonholes, the more versatile swing-needle or zigzag-type machines have recently come into use. These, in part, do the jobs intended for the attachments that come with the straight-sewing machines--and which are so seldom used. Your decision here is whether the specialty job is done often enough to warrant the added cost.

Another choice is between cabinet and portable machines. A cabinet with well-supported leaves and sturdy legs gives good sewing support and is ready for instant use. For any one machine head there are many cabinets to choose from. Since its main purpose is to house the machine, choose the cabinet from this standpoint. The extra cost of a fancy cabinet may better be invested in useful furniture. Where space is limited, as in small homes and apartments, or where a machine must often be moved from place to place, the portable is the usual choice. Some portables are fitted with an extension table for greater work surface; all can be set into a heavy work table flush with the top to give the same stability and work area as cabinet machines. Some portables are merely the regular



sewing head set into a cheap carrying box, heavy and unwieldy, with poor wiring; but portables are available with base and carrying case designed for the machine--sturdy and well finished. The choice between light weight and regular head portables is partly dependent on how much bulky sewing or mending of heavy fabrics will be done.

You also have a choice between the long-shuttle machines and the round-bobbin types. The long-shuttle mechanism is simple and direct, usually easier to clean and oil, but a bit noisier and not designed for as high-speed operation as the round-bobbin class. Unless especially balanced, these machines are not well adapted to electric motors. The round-bobbin machines are either oscillating or rotary. They are usually smoother in operation and better balanced for higher speeds.

A personal inspection of a variety of machines will help you decide on one best suited to your purpose. Visit your friends and neighbors and the dealers, and check the features of one machine against another. You want to choose a machine that is easy to handle and operate, is readily adjusted to your varying sewing needs, is easy to care for and keep in perfect running order.

The following points are offered as a shopping guide in making your comparison. Look for "EASY TO USE" features:

- |   | : Yes :         | : No :          |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Is upper tension setting shown by markings that are easy to see?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 2. Does lamp throw light where you need it?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 3. Is the lamp placed so it will not burn you during normal use of machine, for instance, when raising pressure foot? | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 4. Is the stitch length control scale easy to read?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 5. Will the machine stitch backwards?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 6. Are there adjustable stop positions for the forward and reverse stitching control?                                 | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 7. Is the upper thread tension released when the pressure foot is raised?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 8. Can the pressure on the presser foot be released for darning and embroidery  | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |
| 9. Is there a foot rest on the electric foot control?   | : :<br>: :----- | : :<br>: :----- |



Try out the machines for "GOOD OPERATION": : Yes : No

1. Is machine quiet and free from objectionable noise and vibration? : :  
: :  
: :-----
2. Does machine run smoothly at all speeds? : :  
: :-----
3. Is knee or foot electric motor control comfortable for you to use? : :  
: :-----
4. Does motor start smoothly, providing easy starting as well as slow running? : :  
: :-----
5. Is the machine easy for you to thread? : :  
: :-----
6. Is the bobbin easy to take out and put back? : :  
: :-----
7. Is the bobbin easy for you to thread? : :  
: :-----
8. Try machine on some of your own materials, both straight and curved seams. Is it easy to guide when stitching curved seams? : :  
: :-----
9. Notice whether the material has a tendency to drift to right or left, whether one layer of material tends to creep over the other during sewing. Does the machine satisfy you in this respect? : :  
: :  
: :-----

10. Is bobbin winder easy to use and does it fill the bobbin evenly? : :  
: :-----

Check on "ADJUSTMENTS": : Yes : No

1. Is bottom tension conveniently located and easy to adjust? : :  
: :-----
2. Are the tension adjustments clearly explained in the instruction book? : :  
: :-----
3. Is the stitch length control easy to use? : :  
: :-----
4. Can the toothed feed dog be dropped out of the way for darning and embroidering? : :  
: :-----
5. If the feed dog can be dropped, is the adjustment easy to get to? : :  
: :-----







can be used for a wide variety of effects. Most of these machines swing the needle to both sides of the center sewing line, while a few move only to the right or to the left. When the needle swings to both right and left a greater variety of decorative stitches is possible. Skill in operation is required to develop a uniform pattern or design with the lever or dial controls operated by hand. Some machines are built to use a template which automatically produces a particular pattern without using lever or dial. A selection of the templates gives a wide variety of designs, some of which require considerable practice to do by the hand lever or dial.

Types of motor controls: There are two types of motor controls used with sewing machines--the step control and the carbon control. The step control changes the speed in a series of steps or jumps, usually 5 to 8 from slow speed to fast speed. With some machines the first step of this type of control does not provide the slow speed required at times in sewing operations. The carbon control increases the speed from slow to fast smoothly and uniformly, resulting in easier control of speed, especially when starting and at very slow speeds.

Service agreements and certificates of guarantee: Most dealers who sell sewing machines offer some form of guarantee and free service agreement. The guarantee protects the buyer against the possibility of inferior or defective parts or concealed damage for varying periods of time after purchase. Likewise the free service period places the responsibility on the seller to correct any defect in adjustment or parts other than normal wear at no charge to the buyer.

To be most effective these agreements should be put in writing and signed by persons in authority. Verbal agreements sometimes made by the seller or his representative are not legally binding.

Reminders:

1. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the things you want to know.
2. Take time to select the make and model of machine for your needs before choosing the cabinet.
3. Pick a cabinet for comfortable sewing and utility and not for decorative features alone.
4. Actually sew long enough to satisfy yourself as to what the machine will do.
5. Actually operate the machine to check that the knee control is not too far to the right and the needle not too far to the left for you to sit comfortably.



6. Upon delivery, be sure your machine sews as well as the one demonstrated. Service adjustments are best made before the free service or guarantee period runs out.
7. Learn to use and operate your machine. Also learn to make the adjustments, such as tension, stitch length, and presser foot control. Oil and grease it according to the manufacturer's instructions. Study a copy of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Farmers' Bulletin No. 1944, Sewing Machines-- Cleaning and Adjusting, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., price 15 cents.

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